SARON MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, MI 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

Saron's Mission: *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!!*

Reverend James E. Smith, Pastor
Cell: 269-816-3870
Email: pastorjames@saronlutheran.org

Amanda Bradley, Admin Assistant
Cell: 419-306-5780
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
bradley717@gmail.com

Marcus Roll, Music Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com

Irma Gorman, Organist
Email: pianoladyijg@yahoo.com

Beth Gray-Roll, Organist
Email: egrayroll@gmail.com

Ken Boyd, Bookkeeper
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org

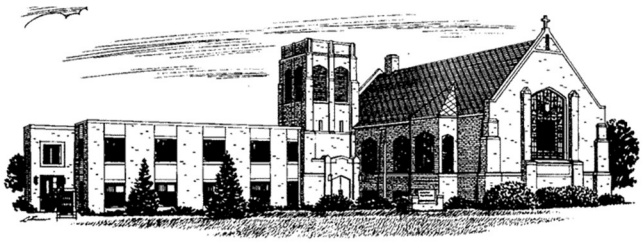
Typical Sunday at Saron:

Summer Schedule (**through Aug 31, 2025**):
10am Worship
On-Location and via Zoom
Nursery Available
No Learning Hour

Fall, Winter and Spring **(begins Sept 7, 2025):**
8:30am Worship On-Location
9:40am Learning Hour for Ages 3-Adult
11am Worship with Zoom Option
Nursery Available

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of the Great Lakes

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia



We're Different, We're the Same!

One of my son Titus's first books was a *Sesame Street* book by Bobbi Jane Kates *We're Different, We're the Same.* The book shows people—and Muppets!—who are different in some ways but the same in other ways. I've been thinking about this in light of our 150th anniversary year.

There are a lot of differences. When I sat down to write this article, I tried to find some early church materials. I did find some minutes from around 1900 and was excited. But I had trouble reading the cursive handwriting. On further reflection, it turned out I had trouble reading the cursive handwriting because it's in Swedish.

There are other obvious differences, too. Most notably, we have become more inclusive and valuing of women in ordained ministry, and we are a Reconciling in Christ congregation. Our building is totally rejiggered. Our congregation is smaller than it once was, yes, but also through Zoom reaches across the state and the country. More recently, I think of all the changes in personnel. My arrival in March, our transition at organist, looking for a new nursery director. We are excited for our new synodical bishop as of Sept. 1, the Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas. And if that's not enough, as this newsletter comes out, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Phoenix is electing a new Presiding Bishop. We are different.

And we are the same. If you want a tearjerker of a hymn, check out *With One Voice* #778 "O Christ the Same," set to the tune of "Londonderry Air," or as I and everyone else knows it "Danny Boy." It's a meditation on that famous verse Hebrews 13:8 "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." We can *rely* on Jesus's character: love, forgiveness, grace: these traits do not change.

> [3]O Christ, the same, secure within whose keeping
> our lives and loves, our days and years remain
> Our work and rest, our waking and our sleeping,
> our calm and storm, our pleasure and our pain
> O Lord of love, for all our joys and sorrows, for all
> our hopes when earth shall fade and flee;
> O Christ the same, beyond our brief tomorrows,
> we bring our thanks for all that is to be.

Happy 150th, Saron!
Pr. James

General Information

OFFICE HOURS

Pastor James E. Smith
Monday – Thursday
Hours may vary. Appointments are great!
Amanda Bradley (Admin Assistant):
Mondays & Thursdays 10am-2pm
Ken Boyd (Bookkeeper):
Thursday Mornings and by Appointment
Helping Hands Office Volunteers:
Wednesdays 9:00am-11am (approx)

If you or your loved one is need of a visit or pastoral care, please contact Pastor James at 269-816-3870.

Specific questions or concerns may be directed to an appropriate council member or committee liaison:
President – Fran Bolson
Vice President – Erik Bergh
Secretary – Claudia Staude
Treasurer – Ed Brunner
Worship – Marilyn Frey
Learning – Fran Bolson or Scott Gaspari
Outreach – Jim Manore
Facilities – Steve Cook or Ed Brunner
Youth – Chuck Knebl
Support – Jim Manore or Ed Brunner
Hospitality – Merrily Smith or Claudia Staude

Caring and Sharing

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members!

8/1 Brad Gorman
8/2 Joe Ulrey
8/3 Ted Dosch
8/3 Tim Standen
8/4 Linda Huff
8/5 Emma Dipert
8/5 Brian Hohman
8/6 Nick Hooper
8/7 Edward Standen
8/8 Nicole Smith
8/8 Matilda Danielsky
8/9 Benjamin Baumgartner
8/9 Molly Hooper
8/9 Mary Smart
8/12 Titus Smith
8/15 Dave Bailey
8/16 Tedd Gorman
8/22 Irma Gorman
8/23 Andy Huff
8/24 Rebecca Sherry
8/26 Elizabeth Kunkel
8/27 Pam Olson

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members!

8/7 Nicole & Victor Coar
8/7 Brad & Marilyn Frey
8/15 TJ & John Koehler
8/24 Jack & Cheryl Houser

If there are any omissions from the birthday or anniversary list, or if a date is incorrect, please let us know so we can get it correct in the future!

CONDOLENCES

We pray for continued peace and comfort for the friends and family of

Robert W. Kynast

Bob passed on July 6, 2025. We had a memorial service at Saron on July 12, 2025.

God is our refuge and strength.
- Psalm 46:1a

CONGRATULATIONS

We were blessed to have two of our young members complete training and begin to serve as acolytes last month!

Christopher Gaspari's first service was July 13, 2025.

Piper Gray-Roll's first service was July 20, 2025.

Thank you both for being willing to support Saron in this important way! Also, thanks to Mary Alice Brunner for altering a robe to fit these tiny torch bearers!

Worship

ASSISTED HEARING DEVICES

Our sound system in the sanctuary came with headphones to assist those having difficulty hearing the worship service. If you are interested, ask Marcus if you can try one out.

SENSORY BAGS

As part of extending an unconditional welcome to all, we have Sensory Bags available for use. These bags contain a variety of fidgets that can help someone feel more able to sit quietly and/or focus. We also have noise canceling headphones for those who are sound sensitive. These brightly colored bags can be found in the narthex.

PRAYER GROUP

You are invited to offer your concerns or thanksgivings via our attendance cards each Sunday. Requests can also be made online via a link in our Thursday email. You may include as much, or little, detail as you wish. Requests are then given to the Monday prayer group. **You are invited to be part of this Monday group at noon.** We follow a simple format of morning prayer and insert the petitions and prayers for Saron's ministry and the world. Most weeks we are done in 30 minutes.

ALTAR FLOWERS

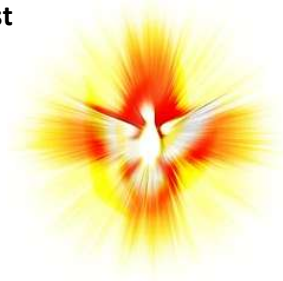
Sponsor a week by using the link in the weekly email or by contacting the church office. Please note any occasion/thanksgiving to be recognized in the bulletin. **Flowers are now $40 per vase.** Checks are payable to Saron with "Flowers" as the memo. Take them home to enjoy then please **return the vase.**

Nursery service is available during worship for children under five years old (exceptions are made, especially for siblings). There is a live-feed monitor in the nursery where you may keep up with the service if you need to stay with your child. For children five and older, there are options to bring into the sanctuary, such as clipboards with coloring pages, sensory bags (see article above) and children's bulletins. If you need to step out with them to regroup, there are quiet activities in a bin next to the sofa in the narthex. We embrace family units in all stages and welcome wiggles & giggles as a part of worship.

We recognize the worship experience for families may not look the same for all and encourage sharing concerns and suggestions with Marilyn Lucy (269-759-3464). Please also contact her if you are willing to volunteer to support this important service.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.



August 3: 8th Sunday after Pentecost
Ecclesiastes 1:2, 12-14; 2:18-23
Psalm 49:1-12
Colossians 3:1-11
Luke 12:13-21

August 10: 150th Anniversary
Genesis 28:10-22
Psalm 84
Hebrews 11:1-3, 12:1-2
Matthew 28:16-20

August 17: 10th Sunday after Pentecost
Jeremiah 23:23-29
Psalm 82
Hebrews 11:29—12:2
Luke 12:49-56

August 24: 11th Sunday after Pentecost
Isaiah 58:9b-14
Psalm 103:1-8
Hebrews 12:18-29
Luke 13:10-17

August 31: 12th Sunday after Pentecost
Proverbs 25:6-7
Psalm 112
Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16
Luke 14:1, 7-14

Youth Group (middle school & high school age) are meeting on August 24 after the service (approximately 11:30am) for pizza and to discuss the upcoming season of gatherings. Come hungry and with ideas on what you think Youth Group should look like! Friends are always welcome.

Contact Chuck Knebl at chasknebl@comcast.net with any questions or to be added to the email list.

Learning

SUNDAY LEARNING HOUR

We will meet again, beginning September 7, with opportunities for many ages and stages!

The Sunday Learning Hour (9:40am-10:30am) offers the following options:

- Preschool - Grade 5: Sunday School
- Grades 6-8: Confirmation Classes
- High School - Adult: Adult Forum

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

Are you looking to get more out of the Bible? Are you hankering for a sneak peek at Sunday's readings? Are you wondering what it could possibly mean to *inwardly digest* the Scriptures? Of course you are! Wednesday morning Bible study is here for you! Throughout the summer, we'll be meeting outside (weather-permitting) on Wednesday morning at 9:30am. We'll be using the "African" or "Lambeth" Bible study method of prayerfully reading through, meditating and discussing the Sunday readings with an emphasis on how each reading personally affects us in our lives of faith. Questions? Ask Pr. James, or simply swing on by and join us!

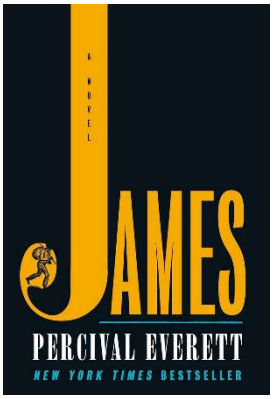
TUESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

Throughout August, we will continue to focus on the lessons of the week. We will begin a new study in September.

We meet Tuesday evenings at 6pm in the upstairs lounge for one hour, then adjourn to a local restaurant for food and fellowship. **All are welcome!**

If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email:
Don Hafer (269/985-3637, haferdon@gmail.com)
Ed Staude (636/288-1016, staude.edmund@gmail.com)
Eric Standen (269/759-3556, dande-standen@sbcglobal.net)

On August 3, we will meet to discuss *Solito: A Memoir* by Javier Zamora. Looking ahead, we will meet on September 7 to discuss *James: A Novel* by Percival Everett.



From Amazon: *A brilliant, action-packed reimagining of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, both harrowing and darkly humorous, told from the enslaved Jim's point of view.*

Questions? Call Kathy Cowall
(269)428-0354
or kcowall@hotmail.com

FORUM & fellowship

This group is on break for the summer and will meet again during the program year. Watch future newsletters for a schedule of topics. Let Ed know if you have any ideas of what we should cover!

Contact Ed Staude at 636/288-1016 with any questions.

Women of the ELCA

DEBORAH CIRCLE

We will **NOT** meet in August. The next meeting will be Wednesday, September 10 at 7pm in the upstairs lounge. Study information will be sent by email at a later date.

Contact Melanie at 269/449-8399 with any questions.

Hospitality

SUNDAY SNACKS

We would love to have snack time outside in the courtyard during August! We just need some hosts!

Who doesn't love a snack during a time of fellowship after the service? If you would like to be a Sunday snack host, sign up via the link in our weekly email or call/email the office so Amanda can sign you up. Please plan for at least 30 to partake. Thank you!

Outreach

THE BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN™ HEART-TO-HEART™

Simple food, honestly sourced and lovingly made creates connections, gives fuel to the fight, and starves ignorance and apathy.
-Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen

On June 26, Mary Alice Brunner, Dave Bradley, Jim Manore and Kathie Bradley assembled 140 sack lunches for the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen. The lunches included a sandwich, chips, fruit and cookies baked by Saron bakers. The Soup Kitchen has recently purchased and moved to the former Lark's BBQ on Main Street in Benton Harbor. During the renovation and until further notice, Saron will be assembling sack lunches at the Red Lotus Nutrition and delivering them to the Soup Kitchen to be distributed to the guests. We would like to thank Red Lotus for allowing us to pack the lunches in their commercial kitchen.

If you are able to help with assembling the lunches or to provide cookies, please use the link in the weekly email or contact Kathie Bradley at 269-921-4665.

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, and prayers.
Joyfully sharing God's love for all!

NOISY OFFERING

ELCA WORLD HUNGER

We receive a noisy offering (or those not-so-noisy bills) on the first Sunday of each month.
These gifts are sent to ELCA World Hunger.

Thank you for your continued support!

Interfaith Action

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

The first step in getting involved, is getting informed. Register to receive their communications at https://swmichinterfaith.org/contact1

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

The Inclusivity Task Force is committed to extending a welcome to all. Our congregation adopted the following welcome statement and is a **Reconciling in Christ** church.

As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. We are committed to the work of racial equity. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

If you ever have any questions on our inclusivity journey, please feel free to call any one of the task force members:

Lindsay Gaspari: 847/373-8826 | lindsay.gaspari@yahoo.com
Meredith Gacek: 269/235-4530 | meredithgacek@yahoo.com

EYE GLASS COLLECTION

Lions RECYCLE For Sight

Do you have old glasses sitting in a drawer? Lions Club has provided a collection box in the narthex. We have several members who are Lions that can deliver our glasses to the club where they will do more good. Thank you!

Support

The Support Committee typically meets the Tuesday before the third Monday of the month at 8pm via Zoom. Contact Don Hafer with any questions at 269/985-3637.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with a brokerage firm to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Ed Brunner at ebrunner54@gmail.com to receive more information. Thanks!

Facilities

HELPING HANDS

We do all sorts of things from building maintenance to preps for worship in the sanctuary to assembling bulletins and newsletters and so much more. We meet on Wednesdays around 9am and know you are invited – whatever your age, gender, or ability. There is a job for you to use your helping hands!

Miscellaneous Bits of News

Bet you didn't know Connie Slater spent the last year disassembling, cutting, reconfiguring, and sewing our altar cloths to fit our new altar table (a square versus the previous rectangle). It was not an easy task as we have different color cloths for each liturgical season or festival. They come in blue, white, black, scarlet, purple, red and green. We are blessed to have such an accomplished seamstress who is willing to use her time and talent to help our church (and saved us money!). The next time you are in the sanctuary, take an extra moment to appreciate the paraments that elevate our worship experience.

On June 28, Saron had a table at the PrideFest in St. Joseph. We were well received and there were lots of good conversations. Word is spreading that Saron is a safe space in our community. That's a *big* deal. Thanks to Pastor James, Lindsay Gaspari, John Taylor, Marcus Roll and Merrily Smith for representing our mission at this event.

BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

Several Saron folks were able to volunteer their time at the Boys & Girls Club annual Unity Day on July 24. It was a hot day but the kids still had a blast!

worship at the beach

We met at Lion's Park Beach on July 9 for a picnic and worship.

How can you not feel closer to God with a view like that?

Saron Lutheran Church

1875 | 150th Anniversary | 2025

Generations of Serving & Sharing God's Love

August 10, 2025

THIS IS NOT A DRILL! We've been planning for well over a year for the Celebratory Worship & Meal and it's finally HERE! We will gather at 10am for a special worship service packed with special music and touches. Bishop Craig Satterlee will be here to preach. Come see friends you may not have seen in years!

Then after the service, those that reserved seats for the meal will head over to Union & Social for more music & food. We will send out additional information about parking soon.

New Church Photo Directory

Lead: Kathie Bradley

If you couldn't make any of the professional photo days, we will be in touch to take your photo after a service or at your home. **If you are at the anniversary meal, we will try to pull you aside and take one there!**

History Research, Documenting & Presenting

Lead: Kate Ulrey

There are new posters with historical information appearing in the narthex throughout the year. We will also be putting as much of Saron's history as we can fit in the new directory. Copies of an older directory, that has 125 years of history, will also be available for the taking. We found boxes of them!

Lead: Marilyn Lucy

We had a Commemorative Prayer & Meditation Garden service day on July 26. We stained the wood that will be used on 3 sides of the prayer nook, a semi-enclosed bench that will block out some of the road noise and provide a peaceful place to sit for prayer, reflection or have a sandwich. We also did tons of maintenance on the existing courtyard beds. Thank you to everyone that came out to help and munch donuts!

The future plans for the space includes installing an outdoor prayer station, relocating the Japanese maple to a new spot in the ground (the current above ground planter is rotting), perhaps a picnic table, secured trash reciptical, and signage to encourage the community to enjoy the space and reinforce our welcome to all.

The extent of our work on the Community Prayer & Meditation Garden is directly tied to the funds we collect. If you would like to contribute, make sure your donation is marked "Prayer Garden."

Those that attended the glass fusion class to make commemorative ornaments or sun catchers had a great time. We are looking forward to selling the extras that were made that day to help offset the cost of the class. We'll have to organize another class like this next year!

2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly
For the Life of the World
July 28 – August 2
PHOENIX, ARIZONA

Members of the ELCA are gathering to participate in plenary discussions to make decisions about the work of this church. They will also spend time in worship and engage in various ways of theological reflection.

We pray for Bishop Satterlee, Vice President Sandy Schlesinger, and all of our synod's voting members who will be attending and participating in this assembly. For those interested in following along, live video of the plenary sessions will be accessible at www.elca.org/CWA.

Installation of Bishop Elect Schneider-Thomas

The Rev. Julie Schneider-Thomas will be installed as bishop of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod on Saturday, September 13, 2025 at 4pm at Trinity Lutheran Church in Grand Rapids (2700 Fulton Street E).

All are welcome to attend! Rostered ministers are invited to vest and process. The color of the day is red.

SARON VBS 2025

Grace Notes: God is with you through the highs and lows!

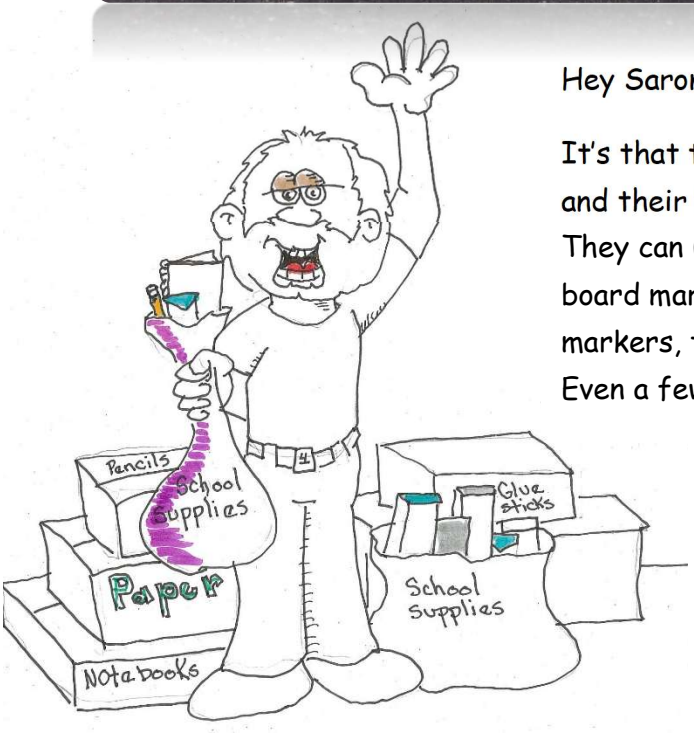
SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org

A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

AUGUST 2025 NEWSLETTER

School Supply Drive



Hey Saron Family!

It's that time of year again when we help out our young friends and their teachers at Lybrook Elementary School in Eau Claire. They can use things like pencils, crayons, colored pencils, white board markers, glue sticks, wide-rule notebooks, washable markers, tissues, cleaning wipes, and Meijer/Walmart gift cards. Even a few backpacks would be great!

School is way harder when you don't have the proper tools. **Saron has the power to set these kids up for success.**

AUGUST 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
3 10am Worship with Zoom Option	**4** Noon Prayer Group	**5** 6pm Bible Study	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**
10 **150th Anniversary Celebration** 10am Worship with Zoom Option	**11** Noon Prayer Group	**12** 6pm Bible Study 8pm Support Meeting	**13** 9am Helping Hands 9:30am Bible Study	**14**	**15**	**16**
17 10am Worship with Zoom Option	**18** Noon Prayer Group 7pm Council Meeting **Newsletter Articles Due**	**19** 6pm Bible Study	**20** 9am Helping Hands 9:30am Bible Study	**21**	**22**	**23**
24 10am Worship with Zoom Option	**25** Noon Prayer Group	**26** 6pm Bible Study	**27** 9am Helping Hands 9:30am Bible Study	**28** **SOUP KITCHEN**	**29**	**30**
31 10am Worship with Zoom Option **LAST SUMMER SUNDAY**						